Aviation a Failure

Navigation of Air Will Never Prove Successful

By PROF. SIMON NEWCOMB,
Eminent American Astronomer.

Let us in fairness see what is to be placed on the credit side of air navigation. First and almost alone among these must be in the reader's mind the fact that steam transportation on land requires the building of railways, which are so expensive that the capital invested in them probably exceeds that invested in all other forms of transportation. Moreover, there are large areas of the earth's surface not yet accessible by rail, among which are the two poles and the higher mountains. All such regions, the mountains excepted, we may suppose to be attainable by the perfected air-ship of the future. The more carefully we analyze these possible advantages, the more we shall find them to diminish in importance. Every part of the earth's surface on which men now live in large numbers, and in which important industries are prosecuted, can now be reached by railways, or will be so reached in time. True, this will involve a constantly increasing investment of capital. But the interest on this investment will be a trifle in comparison with the cost and drawbacks incident to the general introduction of the best system of aerial transportation that is even ideally possible in the present state of our knowledge. . . .

May we not say that the efforts at aerial navigation now being made are simply most ingenious attempts to substitute, as a support of moving bodies, the thin air for the solid ground? And is it not evident, on careful consideration, that the ground affords a much better base than air ever can? Resting upon it we feel safe and know where we are. In the air we are carried about by every wind that blows. Any use that we can make of the air for the purpose of transportation, even when our machinery attains ideal perfection, will be uncertain, dangerous, expensive, and inefficient, as compared with transportation on the earth and ocean. The glamour which surrounds the idea of flying through the air is the result of ancestral notions, implanted in the minds of our race before steam transportation had attained its present development. Exceptional cases there may be in which the air-ship will serve a purpose, but they are few and unimportant.

Crop Reports and the Farmer

By CHARLES C. CLARK,
Bureau of Statistics, U. S. Agricultural Dept.

The government crop reports are especially valuable to farmers, who are benefited by them both directly and indirectly. Those farmers who read the reports and thus keep informed as to condition and prospects of crops profit in a direct way, while all are indirectly benefited through this knowledge being imparted to the great body of progressive and intelligent farmers and dealers instead of remaining the exclusive possession of a few persons.

It is well known that speculators and large dealers in farm products do not depend entirely upon government reports for information concerning crop conditions. They have traveling agents and correspondents (usually local buyers) throughout the United States, who keep them posted upon local conditions, and the large buyer or speculator in return gives to these local buyers or correspondents information in regard to general conditions. Local buyers know the conditions of crops in their vicinity better, as a rule, than the average farmer, because it is their business to keep well informed. The farmer can not, by refusing to report for his locality the condition of crops, prevent buyers or speculators from knowing the condition of the crop. But without the government crop reports, which are made up largely by and for him, the farmer could not be sure of receiving any equivalent information from a disinterested source. He may know very well the condition of crops in his own locality, but must depend upon reports of others, in the newspapers or elsewhere, for the conditions of the entire crop. Prices in his home market are influenced, as a rule, more by the condition of the whole crop than by local conditions. The entire wheat crop of his county may be destroyed and prices be low, if the entire crop is large, or his county may have a "bumper" crop and prices be very high, if the entire crop is short.

Some private reports published in newspapers are honestly prepared and more or less reliable; on the other hand, misleading crop reports are frequently sent throughout the country to affect prices in the interest of speculators. The average farmer does not know which reports are reliable and which are sent out to mislead. The government reports enable farmers to keep themselves informed as to the general conditions, while the wide publicity given them checks and limits the evils of false reports sent out by persons interested in forcing the prices of products to figures not justified by actual conditions.

New Plays and the Public

By ZANGWILL,
the Dramatist.

The manner of bringing forward new plays such as that of submitting a new production to a matinee is simply a way of securing an unprejudiced judgment, something that the average first-night audience does not give. One sees at the usual first night the same rows of regular theater-goers, the same row of dramatic critics, whose mental attitude is more or less set.

And I, for one, do not see why the dramatist should have to depend upon the verdict of such an audience as an indication of the future of the play. As a matter of fact, he does not depend upon it because he cannot. The artist does not depend for the success of his picture upon the first lot of spectators who happen to pass through the gallery and view his work. It is the ultimate judgment of the public that tells, and that may be very different from that of the first-nighters.

Oscar Wilde said a very clever thing when he remarked: "I do not go to first-nights of my own plays to see whether or not my play will be a success, but to see if the audience will be a success."

And that is really the proper state of mind for the dramatist. The abandonment of the formalities of traditional routine in the theatrical world is really a good thing for the drama. It offers more scope for works of real merit, and the dramatist is not necessarily the only person likely to benefit. But the average theatrical manager is strongly conservative as to what he regards as the "theatrical idea," and the way of doing things in order.

SMALL TOWN'S NEEDS

Improvement Pointers on a Comprehensive General Plan.

IDEAL LAYOUT FOR STREETS.

Diagonal Thoroughfares Should Radiate From Railway Station Like Spokes From a Wheel's Hub—Widths For Streets and Roadways.

During the past two or three years a number of elaborate reports have been published setting forth proposed plans for the improvement of some of the largest cities of the country. While these are interesting to all municipal officials, their very elaborateness may serve to discourage the smaller communities whose resources would not permit any approximation to the expenditure required for such improvements. Fortunately their needs are similarly much less than those of the larger cities. A recent report for the suburban town of Ridgewood, N. J., which has been submitted by Charles Mulford Robinson, is unusually complete, considering the size of the town, and is an illustration of the fact that intelligent and expert study of conditions and recommendations for improvements are as desirable for the small community as for the large and that the adoption of the plans need not entail impossible expense, says the Municipal Journal and Engineer.

In considering the general street plan the report starts with the railroad station as the chief focus of traffic, it being the effort of every commuter to either reach it or get away from it in the shortest possible time twice every day. The natural tendency for a suburb is to grow around the station as a center in concentric rings, and in the ideal suburban street plan diagonal thoroughfares would radiate from the station like the spokes from the hub of a wheel. Between these thoroughfares at brief intervals would be short and quiet streets. A secondary focus of the town should be furnished by the town hall and postoffice.

Taking up the details of the streets, Mr. Robinson first considers the sidewalks and unhesitatingly condemns most of those in Ridgewood because the walk proper is placed about twelve to eighteen inches from the curb instead of being at least three feet, as it should be in any residential district. From five to ten feet would be better, while for parkways, boulevards, etc., the distance should be still greater. Assuming a walk six feet wide, which is generally ample on a street sixty feet between lot lines, there should be three feet planted in turf between the property line and the walk, then ten feet in turf between the walk and the curb, the latter strip carrying the street trees and in most cases being further ornamented with flowers and low shrubs. Then would come a twenty-two foot roadway, which is sufficiently wide for any residential street in a small suburb which is not arterial or does not carry a heavy pleasure traffic. On a street eighty feet wide, assuming that there are no car tracks, there is such ample room for beautifying the street that either the width of the side parking between walk and curb could be made about fifteen feet or a central strip of grass fifteen feet wide could divide the roadway into two, each eighteen feet wide, a five foot strip of turf still separating the walk from the curb. Few wagons exceed eight feet in width over all, and touring cars seldom reach seven feet, so that an eighteen foot roadway allows ample room for passing. Where there is a middle strip of parking all through traffic on each side should be in the same direction.

Appearance is not the only argument in favor of such proportioning of the street space, but economy also argues in its favor. A square foot of roadway is more expensive to construct and to maintain than an equal area of turf; also, from a sanitary point of view, the wider the road the greater the volume of dust, and the closer the road comes to the curb the nearer this dust is to the houses and to pedestrians. Moreover, it is assumed, of course, that shade trees will be planted in the strip between sidewalk and curb, and the wider this is the healthier the trees are apt to be and the less the damage they do to both curb and sidewalk paving. When trees are planted in a strip only a few inches wide either they will be puny and sickly and ultimately die for lack of nourishment, or if they do grow vigorously they will force up the walk and throw the curb out of line. With the wider strip of turf there is a better symmetry to the street as a whole, a few inches width only of such being too insignificant a dimension in comparison with the others and irritating by the lack of balance. Moreover, wide parking seems to increase the depth of the adjacent lots and gives the houses a better setting.

As to curbing, it is recommended that uniformity in construction be required in each civic unit, such unit being a whole street or at least a section considerably longer than one lot. The report recommends the substitution of concrete gutters for cobble ones, stating that the latter are difficult to keep clean and are soon deficient in orderliness of aspect.

Street trees should be, as Mr. Robinson states, the property of the community as a whole and in charge of its representative, one who has expert knowledge and who should be responsible for their welfare in every way. The trees on any civic unit should be uniform in variety, age and spacing. If placed alternately on opposite sides of the streets, large growing trees, such as maples or elms, should be planted forty feet apart.

Modern town and city conditions require that street corners be rounded for both utility and looks. The radius should be not less than six feet, and where the sidewalk width is sufficient this may be increased to nine feet or more to advantage. Angles in the street lines are objectionable, and where they exist curves should be substituted for them. A break in the line of a street is frequently desirable, but angles give an objectionable stiffness to the general appearance. Every opportunity should be taken of space at street intersections available for the location at their centers of round or oval flower beds. In these low conifers may be massed, as they are maintained in good appearance with little trouble. Such beds should be protected from teams by coping. Shrubbery placed thus in the center of the roadway is far more effective than side parking, as it is visible far up and down the intersecting streets. Street jogs, the failure of streets on the opposite sides of an intersecting street to meet in alignment, should not be left square, but the corners of each should be rounded so as to obtain a continuous reversed curve.

The report calls attention to the desirability of ordinances establishing building lines on all streets. Unless there is such an ordinance any property owner may injure not only his immediate neighbors, but the appearance of a long stretch of street, by placing his building beyond the general line of others in the neighborhood. How far this building line should be back from the property line must be decided separately for each street.

The matter of parks, parkways and recreative facilities is treated of in this report at some length, but these depend so almost entirely upon the local topography and other conditions that there are few general rules which it seems advisable to endeavor to state. One point, however, is worthy of emphasis—the great need in most suburban towns of making the surroundings of the railroad station much more attractive than so many of them now are. These surroundings should be such as to conceal as far as possible the cruder and more unsightly features necessarily connected with some stations, such as side tracks, turntables, etc., by locating here artistic groupings of shrubbery and shade trees which shall offer a pleasing prospect to either citizen or stranger on alighting from the train.

Surely the Limit.

A friend was once talking with a crazy woman, when a stingy man passed by. "Do you see that man," said she, with cunning smile. "You could blow his soul through a humming-bird's quill, into a mosquito's eye, and the mosquito wouldn't wink."—Sunday Magazine.

SPOTLESS TOWN.

Broek, in Holland, Is the Cleanest Place in the World.

The housecleaning tools, hung upon the wall in neat lines, were as numerous, as diverse and as handsome as the tools of a carpenter or a chauffeur.

There were floor brushes, wall brushes, picture brushes—all sizes and shapes. There were rakes and scrapers for corners. There were polishing instruments of every kind—for glass, for metal, for floors, for furniture. There were sponges, chamois skins, soaps and powders of all descriptions.

"It is a complete set of cleaning tools, isn't it?" said the owner. "It should be complete. I brought it from Holland with me—from Broek—from Spotless Town.

"Broek is the cleanest place in the world. When you enter its gates they give you a pair of new straw sandals yellow as gold to put on so that you will not track up the snowy streets.

"In the bright sunshine you seem to be walking in a town made of sugar candy. The tree trunks are painted yellow, the garden fences are a bright blue, the tables and chairs before the little inns are as white as though carved out of snow.

"Enter a Broek stable. The walls are scarlet, the mangers are green, the floors are yellow. The cows' tails are fastened to rings in the ceiling so that they may not soil nor be soiled."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

THE ILLS OF MAN.

Appendicitis and Gout Rampant Thousands of Years Ago.

The injuries, disease and peculiarities of the people who lived in the valley of the Nile from prehistoric until early Christian times, a period of over 5,000 years, are shown in a pathological collection on view at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. The collection was obtained during the exploration of fifty-seven cemeteries in the area of the Nile valley lying immediately south of the pillars of Konosso, which mark the frontier of ancient Egypt.

The survey was carried out under the direction of Captain H. G. Lyons of the Egyptian government. In one grave were found the abdominal organs of a woman so well preserved that it was possible to say that she suffered from appendicitis, which is considered to be the earliest evidence of this disease. Typical lesions of gout were found in an early Christian subject.

A pair of splints, with bandages, were found on the forearms of a young woman's body, both the forearms having been broken just above the wrists. The splints are almost identical with those used at the present day.

Uncle Allen.

"When the office starts out to seek the man," said Uncle Allen Sparks, "the man generally meets it a little more than half way."

Beggars Are Ingenious.

"Nowhere is the ingenuity of the present age more apparent than in the begging letters received by rich men," said a private secretary. "I have been reading letters of that kind by the hundred for the last fifteen years. Formerly all begging letters sounded alike. So stereotyped were they that they might have been copied verbatim from a ready letter writer. Now the writers display originality. They may want the same old things that their predecessors wanted, but they ask for them in a different way. People in need have acquired the art of expressing themselves forcibly. That is to their advantage.

"It may be unjust, but usually it is the letter that hits the rich man hardest that brings a favorable reply. The writer may not really need assistance nearly so badly as some timid person who can't get away from trite phrases, but he gets the relief asked for every time."—New York Globe.

Useless.

A young enthusiastic revivalist had been exhorting a congregation in a small mining town for over two hours without perceptible effect. He was somewhat discouraged until a rough old miner interrupted him with:

"Say, brother, I'd like to ask a question."

The young revivalist beamed. "Thank you, my man, for your interest," he replied. "I shall be more than glad to set you right on any question. Your desire for enlightenment is a good sign, which I am very, very glad to see. Now, what is it you want to know?"

"Kin I smoke?" asked the miner.—Life.

Quite Handy.

Wife (reading)—Isn't this funny, my dear? Here is an article which says they have found a new species of birds in Australia which have four legs. Now, whatever do you suppose they want four legs for? Husband (yawning)—They are probably politicians, my love, and by this beautiful dispensation of their Creator they are enabled to stand on both sides of the fence at the same time.—Pearson's Weekly.

Showing Him.

"You young scoundrel!" said the father, seizing his disobedient son by the hair. "I'll show you how to treat your mother!"

And he at once proceeded to show young hopeful the way by banging him across the ears two or three times and then shaking him until his hair began to fall out.

Defined.

A little girl who had listened to a discussion of nature fakirs in literature when asked to define the human and animal families replied:

"A brute is an imperfect beast; man is a perfect beast."—Judge.

Unless you bear with the faults of a friend you betray your own.—Syrus.